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December 31, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: DR. KISSINGER

FROM: JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE /S/

SUBJECT: COSVN Directive on the 1970-71 Winter Spring Campaign

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Part one assesses allied plans for the 1970-71 winter-spring campaign.

--The Communists believe that the allies will launch a large scale offensive in the tri-border area of Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam during the coming dry season.

--This offensive is expected to be larger than the allied cross border operation last spring. It will utilize ARVN ground forces and U.S. air and artillery support.

--The objectives of the allied offensive will be to cut the supply corridor from North Vietnam, to prevent the deployment of VC forces in South Vietnam, and to force acceptance of allied terms in Paris.

Part two recapitulates the current VC situation, and contains the customary propaganda statements concerning VC accomplishments. It also stresses, however, that the VC did not succeed in carrying out the rainy season plan and exhorts all cadre to make a special effort during the coming campaign.

Part three lists three general tasks for the 1970-71 winter-spring campaign:

- To break up the anticipated allied offensive;
- To attack and destroy allied pacification efforts;
- To build up the VC infrastructure and increase guerrilla warfare.

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The directive also lists some more specific details.

--The VC intend to use half of their main force units for operations in Cambodia, which will focus on towns and cities, Routes 4, 5, and 7, and provinces in the northeastern and southwestern parts of the country.

--In South Vietnam, large scale attacks are to be avoided, and repeated small attacks against the GVN infrastructure will be emphasized. The major effort will focus on the delta and the central coastal region.

--Rear Service units will operate on a local basis, and those at the COSVN level will be disbanded.

--The VC are studying the possibility of sending a maximum of one main force battalion into each province of South Vietnam.

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--The VC still intend to liberate South Vietnam first. They are holding out for a decisive victory, and will insist upon a complete U.S. withdrawal, the overthrow of Thieu-Ky, and the establishment of a coalition government.

--The VC are not able to liberate Cambodia at this time because the Khmer Rouge are too weak to govern the country. Should Sihanouk be returned to power in the near future, the cadre said, the royalist faction still loyal to him might be too strong for the Cambodian Communists.

Comment. [redacted] the Communists intend to pursue the same tactics they have employed for the past two years. Offensive efforts will be balanced between South Vietnam and Cambodia, with no all-out attacks in either country. Aside from limited capabilities, the directive makes it clear that one important reason for this relatively conservative approach is the Communist belief that their vital facilities in the Laotian panhandle are threatened.

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We find it interesting that the Communists are "studying the possibility" of sending an additional main force battalion to each province in South Vietnam. This reflects some recognition on their part that their previous level of external support has not been sufficient to make protracted warfare a success in South Vietnam. Despite the tactful language, it also suggests the

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existence of an unresolved conflict between COSVN and Hanoi on this point. In this respect, it supports the contention that Tran Nam Trung's recent article emphasizing the need for large unit attacks is indeed noteworthy as evidence that COSVN wants to do more than Hanoi.

Thus we believe that Communist strategy has not yet been completely firmed up. As things stand now, however, this report suggests Communist intent to wage generally low-level warfare in South Vietnam.

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